

Rose Diseases

Roses are one of the most popular and versatile flowering shrubs grown throughout South Carolina. Most roses require a lot of care to grow and bloom properly. One of the most common causes of failure with roses is poor disease control. The three most serious diseases of roses in South Carolina are black spot, powdery mildew, and stem canker and dieback. For more information on roses see HGIC 1172, *Growing Roses*.

Remember that different types of roses vary greatly in their resistance to diseases and the maintenance they require. To grow roses successfully, you must select varieties that require an amount of care equal to that which you are able to provide. Shrub type roses bloom beautifully with few chemical controls needed, while the more susceptible varieties such as hybrid teas, require an effective spray program to be in place before the growing season begins.

BLACK SPOT

Black spot is a common and serious rose disease often reaching epidemic proportions in a season. The disease is caused by the fungus, *Diplocarpon rosae*. It is most severe after long wet, warm periods in the spring. Symptoms occur on rose leaves as circular, black spots surrounded by a yellow area. Infected leaves often drop from the plant. Infection continues throughout the summer months. The immature wood of first year canes develops raised, purple-red irregular blotches. Plants become stunted and produce fewer, paler flowers. By mid-summer severely infected plants may have lost all of their leaves.

Prevention and Treatment: The spread of black spot can be reduced and future infections minimized by following these cultural practices:

- *Plant resistant varieties:* Roses that have some degree of resistance to black spot and powdery mildew are listed in Table 1.
- *Maintain good sanitation:* Sanitation practices are critical in reducing future disease development. In the fall remove all old leaves

on the ground, and any mulch that has been contaminated with infected leaves.

- *Remove and destroy infected canes:* Canes affected by black spot have dark or reddish areas (lesions). Severely infected plants should be pruned back in the fall or early spring to within 1 to 2 inches of the bud union, according to variety and cultivar. During the growing season, remove infected leaves as they appear.
- *Keep leaves dry:* It is best not to syringe plants with water, and do not use overhead irrigation. Promote rapid drying of leaves by planting roses in the full sun, and spacing new plantings far enough apart to allow for good air circulation

Table 1. Selected disease-resistant roses

Black Spot –resistant:

Hybrid tea: ‘Pride N Joy’

Floribunda: ‘Sexy Remy’

Grandiflora: ‘Prima Donna’

Black Spot and Powdery Mildew-moderately resistant:

Hybrid tea: ‘Duet,’ ‘Eiffel Tower,’ ‘Grand Slam,’ ‘Jamaica,’ ‘Matterhorn’

Floribunda: ‘Golden Slipper,’ ‘Saratoga’

Grandiflora: ‘Camelot,’ ‘John S. Armstrong,’ ‘Pink Parfait,’ ‘Queen Elizabeth’

Shrub roses: ‘All That Jazz,’ ‘Carefree Wonder’

Black Spot, Powdery Mildew and Cercospora Leaf Spot –resistant:

Rugosa roses: ‘Blanc Double de Coubert,’ ‘Fru Dagmar Hastrup’ (‘Frau Dagmar Hartopp’) ‘Rugosa Alba,’ ‘Topaz Jewel’

Alba rose: ‘Alba Semi-Plena’

Use fungicide sprays to control black spot effectively, even on resistant varieties. A rigorous fungicide program must be followed during conditions that favor disease development for susceptible cultivars. Select one of the following fungicide sprays, if disease is severe enough to warrant control: captan, chlorothalonil, copper hydroxide, copper sulfate pentahydrate, ferbam, mancozeb, propiconazole, triforine or triforine + acephate & hexakis. Apply all chemicals according to directions on the label.

POWDERY MILDEW

Powdery mildew is another widespread and serious disease problem of roses. It is caused by the fungus, *Sphaerotheca pannosa* var. *rosae* and produces a grayish-white powdery substance on the surfaces of young leaves, shoots and buds. Infected leaves may be distorted, and some leaf drop may occur. Flower buds may fail to open, and those that do may produce poor-quality flowers. It can occur almost anytime during the growing season when temperatures are mild (70 to 80 °F), and the relative humidity is high at night and low during the day. It is most severe in shady areas and during cooler periods.

Prevention and Treatment: Rose varieties differ in their susceptibility to powdery mildew, thus resistant varieties are the best defense against this disease see (Table 1). A film of water inhibits infection, so in years when rainfall is high during spring and summer, control measures may not be needed until the drier months of late summer. Remove and destroy diseased leaves and canes during the growing season. Rake up and destroy leaves under the plant in the fall.

If the disease is severe enough to warrant chemical control, select a fungicide that controls both black spot and powdery mildew. Fungicide sprays recommended for use in the home garden include: copper hydroxide, copper salts of fatty acids, copper sulfate pentahydrate, propiconazole, thiophanate-methyl, triadimefon, triforine or triforine + acephate & hexakis, sulfur, lime sulfur, or neem oil (clarified hydrophobic extract). Apply all chemicals according to directions on the label.

STEM CANKER AND DIEBACK

Cankers usually appear as dead or discolored areas on rose canes and vary in color from light tan to dark purplish brown. They are caused by various species of fungi, including *Botryosphaeria*, *Leptosphaeria*, *Coniothyrium* and *Cryptosporella*. These fungi enter healthy canes through wounds caused by winter injury, improper pruning, wind, hail damage, or flower cutting. Cankers can enlarge until they entirely surround the cane, and/or reach the base (crown) of the plant spreading to other canes or killing the plant. They

commonly occur on roses that have been weakened by black spot, poor nutrition or winter injury.

Prevention and Treatment: There are no fungicides specifically available to control stem canker. Keep plants healthy by controlling black spot, powdery mildew and insects. The following cultural methods can help minimize disease development.

- *Avoid injury to the plant during transplanting, cultivating, pruning, and flower-cutting:* Wounds are a major way the fungus enters the plant.
- *Prune properly:* To prune an outward facing bud. This will help to avoid too many branches growing into the center of the plant that may cross and rub together.
- *Remove and destroy all infected or dead portions of canes immediately:* Make all pruning cuts well below the diseased areas, and prune about one-fourth inch above an outward-facing bud node, without cutting the nodal tissue, at a 45-degree angle. Prune live canes in the spring, not fall. Disinfect cutting tools after use on a diseased plant in a solution of 1 part household bleach to 9 parts water.

RUST

Rose rust is a disease caused by the fungi *Phragmidium* species. It causes orange-colored spots to appear on stems and leaves. When rust is severe, an orange dust-like substance may be present on the plant surface and on the ground below the plant. Rose rust attacks all plant parts except the roots and petals. Severely diseased leaves of highly susceptible cultivars may turn yellow or brown and drop.

Prevention and Treatment: Provide good air circulation. Do not plant roses in crowded areas and prune plants to keep the centers open. Water plants before noon and avoid getting the leaves wet. Remove and destroy diseased leaves and plants. Fungicides containing either ferbam, mancozeb, propiconazole or lime sulfur are recommended for homeowner use. Apply all chemicals according to directions on the label.

BOTRYTIS BLIGHT

Rose flowers and buds are often infected with the gray-brown fuzzy growth of the gray mold fungus *Botrytis cinerea*. The fungus is most active when temperatures are 62 to 72 °F and conditions are moist. Infected canes have discolored, sunken areas (cankers) and dieback that can extend down the stem from the flowers. Diseased flower petals have small, light-colored spots surrounded by reddish halos, which can quickly expand into large, irregular blotches. Buds fail to open and often droop. Thrips can cause similar damage to half-open buds, so inspect plants carefully.

Prevention and Treatment: Keeping the area clean is more important than anything else. Collect and discard all fading flower blossoms and leaves. Provide good air circulation, and avoid wetting the leaves when watering. Disease easily develops on canes that have been damaged and canes that are kept too wet by a manure mulch or wet leaves. If chemical control is necessary, fungicides containing captan, chlorothalonil or neem oil (clarified hydrophobic extract) are available for homeowner use. Use neem oil on a trial basis, especially on open blooms and during hot weather. On dormant bushes PCNB or copper sulfate pentahydrate can be used. Apply all chemicals according to directions on the label.

ROSE MOSAIC

The symptoms associated with *Rose mosaic virus* (RMV) are highly variable. Yellow wavy line patterns, ring spots and mottles in leaves will occur on some varieties of roses sometime during the growing season. In general, symptoms are most evident in the spring. Yellow net and mosaic symptoms on the leaves are also associated with RMV and detract from the overall quality of the plant. Infected plants become weakened and are more sensitive to damage caused by other stresses, such as drought or low temperatures.

Prevention and Treatment: Virus-infected plants cannot be saved. Rose mosaic spreads slowly, if at all, in established rose plantings through root grafts. Infected plants should be removed from highly prized plantings and destroyed. Buy only healthy plants from a reputable dealer; especially avoid purchasing plants showing any mosaic symptoms.

CROWN GALL

This disease is caused by a soil-inhabiting bacterium, *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*, that infects many ornamentals in the home garden. The symptoms are rounded galls, or swellings, that occur at or just below the soil surface on stems or roots. The galls are light green or nearly white when young. As they age, the galls darken and become woody, ranging in size from small swellings to areas several inches across. The galls disrupt the flow of water and nutrients traveling up from the roots and stems, thus weakening and stunting the top of the plant.

Prevention and Treatment: To prevent crown gall, select disease-free roses. Once a plant is infected, nothing can be done since there are no chemical controls available for crown gall. Avoid injury to the roots and crown of the plant during planting and cultivating because the bacteria enter through fresh wounds. Remove infected plants as soon as galls are observed. If possible, remove and discard the soil from the area where the infected plant was located. Disinfect all cutting and pruning tools that have been used near crown gall. To disinfect tools, dip them for several minutes in a solution of 0.5 percent sodium hypochlorite (household bleach).

Prepared by Nancy Doubrava, HGIC Information Specialist, and James H. Blake, Extension Plant Pathologist, Clemson University.

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